Implementing the Victorian Curriculum Civics and Citizenship

Schools use the Victorian Curriculum Civics and Citizenship Levels 3–10 achievement standards and content descriptions to plan their teaching and learning program, including assessment. Content descriptions, along with achievement standards, are the core elements of the Victorian Curriculum F–10, in that they specify the common set of knowledge and skills that students have an entitlement to be taught. It is important to read the achievement standards and content descriptions together.

Civics and Citizenship includes three strands: Government and Democracy, Laws and Citizens, and Citizenship, Diversity and Identity. Depending on the relevance and appropriateness of the contemporary issue, application of the content descriptions can be within a strand or content descriptions across strands.

Achievement standards

In implementing the curriculum, assessment practices provide the opportunity for all students to work towards each achievement standard in the curriculum continuum as they progress towards Level 10. Students are assessed against the achievement standards to identify how well they have demonstrated the knowledge, skills and understandings within Civics and Citizenship and, as such, the achievement standards are the basis for reporting student achievement.

The achievement standards should be used by teachers to plan, monitor and assess the learning achievement of every student and to indicate student progress. Civics and Citizenship includes achievement standards at Levels 3 and 4, Levels 5 and 6, Levels 7 and 8 and Levels 9 and 10 that set out high expectations for the level of student learning and define what students should know and be able to do along a continuum of learning.

An important aspect of curriculum planning is being able to articulate what student progress looks like, using the achievement standards in the curriculum continuum. The achievement standards:

* describe a continuum of learning (from Level 3 to Level 10)
* are used to develop assessment
* are used to develop assessment tools such as rubrics
* identify what students have learned
* identify what students are going to learn in a unit to progress them to the next standard
* explain how well a student should learn the content
* are used to measure student progress
* are the basis for feedback and reporting student achievement
* plan for a student’s next progression wherever that may be on their learning journey.

The achievement standard describes the complexity of a skill or concept. When planning for assessment it is important to reflect on the level of sophistication in the knowledge and/or skill and determine what learning looks like for students as they work towards and/or demonstrate the achievement standard.

The following extracts from achievement standards shows the curriculum continuum related to the Government and Democracy strand. Consider how this shows increasing complexity of knowledge, skills and concepts and what student learning and progression may look like.

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| Levels 5 and 6 | Levels 7 and 8 | Levels 9 and 10 |
| By the end of Level 6, students:   * identify the values that underpin Australia’s democracy and explain the importance of the electoral process * describe the purpose of key institutions and levels of government in Australia’s democracy * analyse contemporary issues and use evidence to support a point of view about civics and citizenship issues * identify possible solutions to an issue as part of a plan for action. | By the end of Level 8, students:   * explain features of Australia’s system of government, and the purpose of the Constitution in Australia’s representative democracy * analyse features of Australian democracy * explain features that enable active participation * analyse issues about national identity in Australia and the factors that contribute to people’s sense of belonging * identify ways they can be active and informed citizens and take action in different contexts. | By the end of Level 10, students:   * evaluate features of Australia’s political system, and identify and analyse the influences on people’s electoral choices * compare and evaluate the key features and values of systems of government, and analyse Australia’s global roles and responsibilities * evaluate a range of factors that sustain democratic societies * analyse ways they can be active and informed citizens in different contexts, taking into account multiple perspectives and ambiguities. |

Content descriptions

The three strands in Civics and Citizenship contain content descriptions that set out the disciplinary knowledge, skills and understanding that schools need to teach in order for students to become ‘… conﬁdent and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community’ (Alice Springs [Mparntwe] Education Declaration 2019). The content descriptions set out the disciplinary knowledge about the political and legal systems, the values, principles, institutions and practices of Australia’s system of democratic government and law, the role of the citizen in Australian government and society, and the nature of citizenship, diversity and identity in contemporary society.

Look at the following examples from Levels 7 and 8 and consider:

* What knowledge are students required to learn?
* What is the cognitive demand of the student thinking (describe, discuss, explain)?
* What is the relationship between content descriptions, achievement standards and the contemporary issue?
* How would you design an assessment task using the achievement standard and content descriptions?
* What do students already know and are able to do?
* What might student learning look like when a student is demonstrating this part of the achievement standard when exploring a contemporary issue?
* What would a student be expected to know (content descriptions) and be able to do in relation to the contemporary issue?
* What does student progress look like as they work towards the next standard, that is Levels 9 and 10?   
  (Note, some students in a class may be working towards Levels 3 and 4 or Levels 5 and 6.)
* How do you plan for student progression?

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| Levels 7 and 8 content descriptions | Levels 7 and 8 achievement standard extracts |
| Government and Democracy Strand   * Describe key features of government under the Australian Constitution, including the separation of powers, the Executive, the role of the Houses of Parliament, and the division of powers * Discuss the freedoms that enable active participation in Australia's democracy within the bounds of law, including freedom of speech, association, assembly, religion and movement * Explain how citizens can participate in Australia's democracy, including the use of the electoral system, contact with their elected representatives, use of lobby groups, interest groups and direct action * Describe the process of constitutional change through a referendum | By the end of Level 8, students:   * explain features of Australia’s system of government, and the purpose of the Constitution in Australia’s representative democracy * analyse features of Australian democracy * explain features that enable active participation * analyse issues about national identity in Australia and the factors that contribute to people’s sense of belonging * identify ways they can be active and informed citizens, and take action, in different contexts. |

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 [Curriculum Planning Resource](https://curriculumplanning.vcaa.vic.edu.au/home) provides advice on implementing the curriculum in teaching and learning programs from a whole-school planning perspective, by school, by curriculum area planning, by year level and by units or lessons. For advice on implementing the curriculum please explore more VCAA resources:

* [Overview of the Victorian Curriculum F–10](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/professional-learning/F-10-program/Pages/IntroducingtheVictorianCurriculumF-10.aspx) (video)
* [Introducing Civics and Citizenship F–6](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/professional-learning/F-10-program/Pages/IntroducingtheVictorianCurriculumF-10.aspx) (video)
* [Introducing Civics and Citizenship 7–10](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/professional-learning/F-10-program/Pages/IntroducingtheVictorianCurriculumF-10.aspx) (video).

Developing a learning and teaching unit

When developing units of learning, teachers:

1. Highlight the specific elements of the achievement standard that are being targeted in the assessment tool and assessment task.
2. Highlight the corresponding elements in the achievement standard above and below the targeted level.
3. Develop a description of what a student would be expected to do, make, say or write as they progress towards the next achievement standard and between achievement standards, including:

* What does student learning look like at the achievement standards and between the achievement standards?
* What does student progress look like? What actions should a student be able to know and do? What elements indicate progress?
* What evidence do you need to collect to illustrate student learning and student progression?

1. Design an assessment tool and task to show what students can do, say, make or write.
2. Choose which content descriptions will be taught and assessed in this unit.
3. Develop targeted learning activities that enact the intent of the curriculum, so that these activities may progress students towards the achievement standard. Key points to consider include:

* How do you plan for a student to progress?
* What targeted learning activities may you need to deploy to support student progression along the continuum of learning?

To assist teachers to describe what student progress may look like ‘between’ achievement standards, the VCAA has provided online ‘indicative progress templates’. These templates include examples of what indicative progress may look like and a template prepopulated with the relevant achievement standards. Indicative progress templates for Civics and Citizenship are available on the [Civics and Citizenship, Assessment resources](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/foundation-10/resources/civics-and-citizenship/assessmentresources/Pages/default.aspx) webpage.

After the delivery of the learning and teaching program, teachers should reflect on the effectiveness of the program. Take time to consider the following:

* What aspects of the tasks and/or activities worked? Identify what adjustments could be made.
* Once students’ work is collected, analysed and interpreted, take the time to reflect holistically on the evidence of learning and whether the assessment tools and tasks used were fit for purpose or need some further refinement.
* Consider if the assessment task, rubric and/or learning activities provided evidence of student learning and progression towards the achievement standard.
* What evidence have you gathered from the assessment task and rubric?
* Can you annotate student learning (work samples) to illustrate how a student is either at or working towards the achievement standard?
* Discuss how evidence gathered will inform individual student progression in the next learning and teaching unit.
* Discuss how the learning and teaching plan could be improved.
* Discuss how the evidence and discussion will influence the development of the next learning and teaching unit.